Defining roles in the online classroom to assure learning

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The emergence of the internet has provided the opportunity for universities to begin offering online courses. As more students seek flexibility in education delivery, the greater the need becomes for online learning, which may result in developing courses that do not promote assurance of learning. This paper will explore how assurance of learning can take place in the online courseroom by evaluating student, instructor, and instructional design readiness for online learning, as well as defining the role of how each can promote assurance of learning utilizing reflective questions.
student learning in higher education, ensuring that students not only are prepared, but that they actually learn in online courses, is important. The Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB) sets assurance of learning as one of the accreditation standards universities must achieve in order to obtain the AACSB accreditation either through student selection into the university or program, course-embedded measurement, or stand-alone testing or performance (AACSB, 2007).

The student selection into the university or program standard administers an examination prior to entrance, in which the student must achieve a minimum score. This examination evaluates a student’s knowledge and skills from past educational experiences in areas such as: communications, statistics, or technology. The minimum score for the examination should be established through a validation process that indicates the goals of the university or program are met before entrance (AACSB, 2007).

Utilizing the course-embedded measurement standard incorporates assignments into the course that measure assurance of learning separately by criteria outlined from the faculty. An example of this measurement is a project in a management course that measures the ability to make a strategic recommendation. Evaluation of the project is performed twice by way of instructor criteria and faculty criteria. The first evaluation has the instructor assign a grade for the project based on their criteria. The second evaluation determines if the strategic recommendation met the criteria established by the faculty (AACSB, 2007).

Stand-alone testing or performance requires students to meet one or more learning goals through a standardized test. The assessment is successful when students are required to demonstrate competencies in defined knowledge or skill areas in order to qualify for graduation or progress in an academic program. Normally, the administration of the assessment occurs outside of normal classroom schedules and is developed either by the school or an outside vendor (AACSB, 2007).

Therefore, establishing online courses requires an increased level of thought in terms of the assurance of learning to ensure the appropriate measures are in place for course setup, learning tools, instructor facilitation, and assessment to meet accreditation standards. The following will discuss how assurance of learning can take place in the online course room by evaluating student, instructor, and instructional design readiness for online learning and defining the role of how each can promote assurance of learning.

**Student Readiness for Online Instruction**

There are many factors that can impact students’ readiness and level of preparedness for entering the online course environment. Some of the factors that can impact a student’s readiness and preparedness to enter the online course environment include: feeling of isolation, the inability to adapt to self-directed learning, dealing with heavy workloads, and lacking experience with online learning. With the shift of online learning, each of these factors is equally important and should be taken into consideration. Each of these factors is discussed in greater detail.

**Feeling of Isolation**

The focus of online learning is education that does not mandate one to enter a classroom and interact with the instructor or other students face-to-face (Moore & Kearsley, 2005). With the face-to-face interaction removed, some students may have feelings of isolation arise when placed in an environment where the exchange of ideas is primarily in the means of written communication. Feeling of isolation is defined as feeling set apart from others (Webster, 2008). Ultimately, it is hard for university administrators or instructors to diagnose whether a student can handle limited interaction with others and still maintain the ability to learn. However, establishing expectations beforehand of the requirements of online learning will allow students to self reflect (i.e., the ability to
formulate a thought, idea, or opinion by way of meditation (Webster, 2008)). Self-reflection assists in determining whether online instruction is the most effective method of learning for them.

Bocchi, Eastman, and Swift (2004) proposed expectations that universities and instructors should establish for students to succeed in the online environment: self-discipline, motivation, commitment, time management skills, and organization skills to facilitate independent start-up and completion of the job without the need of prompting. Devi (2001) explains that students should be able to identify and understand their learning style, as well as know the level of interaction needed to remain focused in the course.

**Inability to Adapt to Self-Directed Learning**

The suggested expectations by Bocchi et al. (2004) — self-discipline, motivation, commitment, and organization skills — play hand-in-hand with the learner’s ability to adapt to self-directed learning. Although the online courseroom is outlined by a syllabus that details course readings, assignments, and due dates, the learner does not have the opportunity to attend a face-to-face lecture of the subject with instructor guidance and accountability. Conversely, the online courseroom requires students to be self-disciplined and take the responsibility to establish a schedule to commit themselves to reading the required texts for the unit, posting discussions that integrate critical-thinking skills, providing valued responses to other students’ discussions, and submitting assignments in a timely fashion.

Hongmei (2002) states those students who are self-disciplined and self-motivated are more likely to succeed in self-directed learning. Lack of self-discipline and organizational skills can and does have an effect on learner motivation and commitment. Workloads that are large and require a great deal of time give the feeling of never getting caught up (defeating motivation to succeed) and institute the attitude of wanting to give up (defeating commitment to continue).

**Heavy Workload**

According to Bocchi et al. (2004), it is unrealistic to think online learning requires less time than face-to-face courses and potential online learners “must” understand this concept. In fact, online learning can actually require more time on the part of the learner depending on how the course is set up. Students can spend upwards of twelve or more hours per week on each online course and they must realize much of that time will include reading large portions of text — both textbook and discussions within the courseroom (Bocchi et al., 2004).

With online learning incorporating a great deal of text, this environment also necessitates that communication skills are demonstrated at a superb level. Bocchi et al. (2004) explain that for success to occur in the online courseroom, students must be able to clearly and briefly define ideas in written form, but also demonstrate computer technology competency. Vonderwell, Liang, and Alderman (2007) go on to add that a student’s writing ability can influence the level of learning that takes place through idea articulation and how the instructor evaluates the responses in discussion.

Therefore, students who are not strong in reading large portions of text or communicating in a written format can be affected in terms of motivation. For example, discussion posts may not be strong and more work is required (responses are never correct). Thus, affecting the student’s commitment because responses have to be reworked and there is still a lack of understanding in regards to texts.

**Lack of Experience**

As universities incorporate online learning into degree programs, the urge to want to integrate online learning quickly can result in detrimental effects for the university, instructor, and the student because important criteria involved in the process may be overlooked, creating a process that has to then be reworked. McEwen (2001) states that professors entering the online environment must learn a new tool which requires greater time in organizing,
preparing, teaching, and monitoring the courseroom, as compared to traditional courses. It is imperative that faculty members put in the time needed to ensure the course is successful. Additionally, Kearsley (2002) explains that if instructors are not excited about the course or the content being taught, the lack of enthusiasm will be apparent to students. Thus, it is just as important for instructors to understand what is being sought from online teaching because students ultimately suffer if an instructor is not fully engaged to guide the course.

Conversely, it is also important for students to understand the need for a general knowledge of technology required to navigate the online courseroom and be able to interact appropriately and in a timely fashion (Bocchi et al., 2004). Not knowing how to interact in the courseroom or accurately utilize the learning management system technology can result in setbacks for all learners within the course because discussion cannot take place, creating an environment where there is no learning occurring.

**Student Role in Online Courses**

Based on the discussion of reasons as to why students are not ready for online programs, students clearly play an essential role in the success of online learning. Accordingly, the role the student should play when contemplating online learning is one of an investigator. Universities should provide students with the expectations for online learning: self-discipline, motivation, commitment, time management skills, and organization skills to work independently and to finish the job without need of prompting. Based on these defined expectations, students should ask themselves the following questions outlined in Table 1 to determine readiness for online programs.

Prior to beginning an online program, it is imperative students fully understand what they want from an online degree program, their learning style, and identification of skills that indicate they will be successful in such an environment (Bocchi et al., 2004). Completing the questions in Table 1 will assist students in making that evaluation before entering the online courseroom. If students find themselves more comfortable with face-to-face lectures or prefer the social interaction of a traditional classroom, then online learning may not be a good option. The evaluation of preferences, skills, and abilities will assist in determining if online learning is appropriate for an individual.

**Instructor Readiness for Online Instruction**

The rise of online degree programs has seen more instructors teaching both online and in traditional classrooms or 100% online (Vonderwell et al., 2007; Bocchi et al., 2004). As online learning is not for all students, it is also not for all instructors. As a result, faculty members interested in online teaching should also reflect on a similar set of questions as seen in Table 2, as these expectations cannot be required of the student if the same is not expected of the instructor.

Faculty interested in teaching online courses should also be required to attend formal training that provides a certification. These training classes can range in length from six weeks to six months and provide faculty instruction on the basics of teaching online, engaging students, establishing evaluation methods, utilizing learning management software provided by the university, mentoring online, as well as providing an opportunity to join a community of practice composed of other online faculty (Meister, 2006b). The emergence of online programs has increased the number of universities that utilize this type of training before faculty can teach online, which aids in developing an effective course because the instructor has learned how to engage learners, utilize the foundations of online instruction, and establish evaluation measures for coursework (in regards to instructional design by way of this paper, the instructor designs the course) (Meister, 2006a).

As stated before, instructors must be excited and knowledgeable about the content being
### Table 1: Student Evaluation Questions to Determine Readiness for Online Programs

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Question</th>
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<tr>
<td>1. Why do I want to enroll in an online course or program?</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Am I technically savvy?</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Does my schedule allow me the flexibility to attend online courses?</td>
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<tr>
<td>a. Am I able to dedicate 12 or more hours a week to an online course?</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. How effective are my time management skills and how often do I fall behind on projects or assignments?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. How effective are my organizational skills and how often do I find myself trying to reorganize my work?</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. How committed am I to school?</td>
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<tr>
<td>b. How committed am I to projects or assignments in general?</td>
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<tr>
<td>c. How often do I get frustrated on a project or assignment and how is my commitment affected?</td>
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<tr>
<td>7. Am I able to establish a project timeline or do I need someone to guide me through the project?</td>
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<tr>
<td>8. Am I am able to complete a project or study for a test as the course progresses or do I complete projects or study for tests at the last minute?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. How motivated am I to study and learn without face-to-face interaction?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. How comfortable am I with reading large portions of text and discussion posts?</td>
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</table>

Lack of excitement and knowledge can be detected by students. Instructors must be able to work with a diverse group of students, as well as engage the students in the learning. A primary method utilized in online courses to engage students is discussion forums. Vonderwell et al. (2007) state that online discussion forums give online learners the ability to participate and drive learning through discussion posts and responses utilizing critical thinking skills. Furthermore, a study conducted by Wu and Hiltz (2004) found that from three online courses, half of the students reported learning effectively through online discussions and 78% of the students found online discussions as a valuable tool to exchange ideas between
Table 2: Instructor Evaluation Questions to Determine Readiness for Online Teaching

1. Why do I want to teach in an online course or program?
2. Am I technically savvy?
3. Does my schedule allow me the flexibility to teach online courses?
   a. Am I able to dedicate 12 or more hours a week to an online course?
4. How effective are my time management skills and how often do I fall behind on projects or assignments?
5. How effective are my organizational skills and how often do I find myself trying to reorganize my work?
6. How committed am I to teaching online?
   b. How committed am I to projects or assignments in general?
   c. How often do I get frustrated on a project or assignment and how is my commitment affected?
7. Am I able to establish a project timeline or do I need someone to guide me through the project?
8. Am I am able to complete a project in a timely manner or do I complete projects at the last minute?
9. How motivated am I to teach without face-to-face interaction?
10. How comfortable am I with reading large portions of text and discussion posts?

their peers and instructors. Vonderwell et al. (2007) add that "instructors should structure a feedback mechanism that will encourage student inquiry, collaboration and metacognitive feedback and self-assessment strategies" (p. 311). Ultimately, integrating this type of technology reverts back to the importance of being able to communicate effectively through writing (Vonderwell et al., 2007; Bocchi et al., 2004; Wu & Hiltz, 2004).

Discussion forums are just one method of engaging and assessing student learning in an online environment. Other engagement tools utilized in online learning include chats and assignments. The chat function allows students and instructors to interact in real-time presenting
the student the opportunity to ask questions of the instructor. Assignments allow an instructor to gauge how a student understands the course content and concepts by integrating those concepts into a research paper that analyzes a client or a topic in greater detail (Vonderwell et al., 2007).

With written communication being the driving factor behind online learning, establishing assessment criteria is crucial. The Australian National Training Authority (2002) discusses the need for appropriate assessment methods to be identified for online learning, as well as how online learning modifies the way that assignments are monitored and managed throughout the course. Furthermore, Robles and Braathen (2002) explain that:

The opportunity for online education brings about new considerations in assessment. Online assessment is more than just testing and evaluation of students. By keeping in mind some basic tenets of assessment, online educators can adapt their assessment activities to provide useful feedback, accountability and opportunities to demonstrate quality (p. 39).

A study conducted by Vonderwell et al. (2007) revealed students found assessment criteria and rubrics imperative in measuring learning throughout the other learners in the course, but also themselves. Specifically, the students acknowledged that for rubrics to be effective, each assignment or discussion topic should have detailed criteria that outline clear expectations and instructions of what is expected (Vonderwell et al., 2007).

**Instructor Role for Online Instruction**

Instructor engagement is an important aspect in the online courseroom, as students should be able to effectively measure content understanding through guidance and feedback of the instructor (Vonderwell et al., 2007). Thus, the role the instructor should play when developing online learning is one of evaluator (i.e., analyze and ask questions about the course design). When creating the online courseroom, each instructor should consider the questions in Table 3.

Once the course has been designed and begun, the instructor’s role should be one of a mentor by analyzing and guiding the course. The course learning, however, is guided by students and not necessarily by the instructor. The more feedback and questions students provide to their fellow learners, the deeper and richer the learning will be (Meister, 2006b; Bocchi et al., 2004). The instructor’s ultimate goal is to serve as a guide to the students’ learning, but with the students taking primary control of how involved the learning becomes.

If the instructor determines that the course is being led off track or if further clarification is needed by the class as a whole, the instructor should provide feedback to reorient the course. Evaluating assurance of learning while the course is in progress involves reflecting upon the questions in Table 4.

**Instructional Design Readiness**

Instructional design is defined as the systematic process of improving instruction through analysis of learning needs and creation of learning materials utilizing multimedia and technology (Instructional Design, 2007). Appropriate instructional design can help universities and faculty ensure students will learn in the online environment. Designing online courses requires a methodical and timely plan to guarantee all bases are covered and learning will be most effective based on the type of learning the class is built upon (Bocchi et al., 2004): self-paced independent study, asynchronous interactive learning, synchronous learning, and a combination of online and in-person learning. Asynchronous learning allows learners and instructors to interact in the courseroom at different times; whereas, synchronous learning allows learners and instructors to interact in the courseroom at the same time (Clark & Mayer, 2003).
Table 3: Instructor Evaluation Questions to Build an Online Courseroom

1. What role will I serve in the course?
2. How will the course be setup?
   a. Will the course be setup by weekly units?
   b. Will the course be setup by chapters?
   c. Will the course be setup by topics?
3. What is the timeframe each week will run (starts on a Monday/ends on Sunday, etc.)?
4. What type of learning will occur (refer to course development)?
   d. Will there be tests or a course project?
      i. Is a portion of the course project completed each week?
5. What learning management system tools will be utilized to engage learners?
6. What are the topics for discussion forums?
   e. When are the due dates for discussion posts?
   f. How many discussions must be each student respond to?
      i. How many fellow learners must each student respond to?
   g. What are the evaluation criteria for discussions (rubrics, etc.)?
7. What are the assignments for the course?
   h. When are the due dates for the assignments?
   i. How are the assignments to be submitted?
   j. What are the evaluation criteria for the assignments (rubrics, etc.)?

Bocchi et al. (2004) add that synchronous learning tends to focus on chats and specific deadlines students must meet; whereas, asynchronous learning requires the student to be more self-motivated. Cassiani (2001) explains that asynchronous learning tends to allow for more participation among students because participation is not constrained by time like it is in the traditional classroom.

Learning management systems such as Blackboard/WebCT and Moodle both promote course development for synchronous and asynchronous learning. Synchronous learning can be demonstrated by utilizing functions such as the chat function in both Blackboard/WebCT
Table 4: Course Evaluation Questions to Determine Assurance of Learning

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<table>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>What role am I serving (facilitator, mentor, etc.)?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>How effective is the course setup (weekly units, chapters, etc.)?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Is the timeframe each week runs effective (starts on a Monday/ends on Sunday, etc.)?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Has the selected type of learning proved effective (if enough time has allotted)?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Are the selected learning management system tools engaging students?</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Are the discussion forum topics useful to learning?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>a. Are the due dates for discussion posts appropriate?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b. Is the number of posts each student responds to appropriate?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>i. Is the number of how many fellow learners must each student responds to appropriate?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>c. Are the evaluation criteria for discussions (rubrics, etc.) effective in grading?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Are the assignments for the course useful to learning?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>d. Are the due dates for assignments appropriate?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>e. Are students able to submit assignments?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>f. Are the evaluation criteria for assignments (rubrics, etc.) effective in grading?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

and Moodle and the whiteboard available in Blackboard/WebCT (Blackboard, 2008; Moodle, 2008). The two learning management systems build asynchronous learning environments by utilizing tools such as discussion forums and assignments. Students will find most online programs utilizing the asynchronous learning format because it allows groups of learners to engage in an exchange of shared ideas that are separated by time and space (Gunawardena, Lowe, & Anderson, 1997).

When developing a course, Miles (2001) explains that instructors need to be aware of feelings of isolation and have the ability to address those feelings, incorporate and maintain flexibility, utilize aspects of asynchronous
learning, establish learning objectives that incorporate the university or academic program's goals, and utilize materials that use low bandwidth for easy access. Additionally, Kearsley (2002) and Smith (2001) suggest that courses should only have 20 or less students because of the high level of interaction required by the instructor.

With asynchronous learning being something that can be produced by most learning management systems, it is important to understand how an instructor can utilize this type of learning to the fullest. Integrating findings from a study conducted by Vonderwell et al. (2007) provides valuable information for instructors as to what drives learning among students through online discussions to include: structure, learning community, self-regulatory cognitions, learner autonomy, and student writing skills.

Structure

Structure is key to learning and without a structured outline for the course, learning can traverse off course. Students that participated in the study conducted by Vonderwell et al. (2007) reported that discussion topics lacking structure impact the overall learning by limiting student responses. In addition, classroom observations revealed that threaded-discussion versus non-threaded discussion initiated more thoughtful, critically thought out answers (Vonderwell et al., 2007). Non-threaded discussion involves inquiry of a single question which can lead to redundant and repetitive responses. Threaded-discussion involves inquiry of multiple questions through multiple threads or responses (Vonderwell et al., 2007). Utilizing threaded-discussions allows inquiry among students and drives more in-depth responses that extend beyond the typical yes or no.

Learning Community

In an asynchronous learning environment, a community is built of learners and the instructor, in which various observations and interpretations are shared to explore new learning. Several learners from the study conducted by Vonderwell et al. (2007) state the learning is guided by the students and good critical thinking skills allow the conversation to continue throughout the course, promoting continuous learning within the courseroom.

The learning environment must also include active participation from the instructor. Vonderwell et al. (2007) found "instructor presence and student participation quality influenced the level of student involvement in the discussion. The quality of the participation was important to model and sustain a high standard level of student engagement and motivation" (p. 317). Further findings determined instructor feedback was actively sought from students as a method of gauging understanding in the course. Instructor feedback was provided both individually and to the class as a whole (Vonderwell et al., 2007).

Self-Regulatory Cognitions

With the advancements of research in psychology, studies have found that a person's ability to self-reflect, individually and in a team environment, influences a person's insight to access expectations of performance and success (Behncke, 2002). Furthermore, Vonderwell et al. (2007) reported findings that "suggest that self-regulatory cognitions and activities, such as reflection, metacognition and self-regulation, were essential aspects of learning and assessment processes in the online learning environment" (p. 318). Zimmerman (2001) defines self-regulation as the process in which a student is actively involved in their learning process from a motivational, behavioral, metacognitive standpoint. Self-regulation among students allows them to see how much participation is taking place, promote learning responsibility through encouragement of other learners to post discussions, and review discussions to determine strong discussions and those discussions needing further definition (Vonderwell et al., 2007).

Students working in an asynchronous learning environment are required to think responses through more thoroughly, critically, and
reflectively. Responses that simply state “I agree” or “I disagree” do not promote learning and students are aware of peers in the classroom analyzing these answers (Vonderwell et al., 2007). Reflecting on unit discussions also allows students to bring together multiple responses and gain an even greater understanding of the course content possibly generating further questions, which provides development for everyone.

**Learner Autonomy**

Online learning in an asynchronous learning environment tends to generate learners that are responsible for their own learning: autonomous learners (Vonderwell et al., 2007; Bocchi et al., 2004). Learners of this type generally ask questions if further clarification is needed; utilizing multiple questions in unit discussion promotes further questioning among students, which builds a great understanding of the course content (Vonderwell et al., 2007; Meister, 2006b).

**Writing Skills**

Effective writing skills are imperative to possess in an online environment because learners must articulate without the use of non-verbal cues or voice tone to stress emphasis on what the learner is communicating. Additionally, students must be able to drive the learning in the course by integrating critical thinking skills in communications, but also instill the desire to participate with the same determination by posing challenges that require a defense (Vonderwell et al., 2007; Bocchi et al., 2004).

**Instructional Design Role**

Course development is by far the most important step in creating an online course, as the course should stimulate and challenge learners at the same time (Vonderwell et al., 2007; Meister, 2006b; Bocchi et al., 2004). The role instructional design should play is a guide. The instructional design should guide the engagement and learning of the course. Therefore, the instructor should be able to evaluate the course by determining the overall ability to promote learning. To determine the course’s overall ability to promote learning, the instructor needs to determine if the appropriate methods are being utilized to engage the learner, such as: discussion forums, chats, and presentations (Vonderwell et al., 2007; Meister, 2006b).

Once engagement method effectiveness is evaluated, ensure each method is promoting maximum learning. For instance, ensure discussion forums are structured, rubrics are set for each, and discussion takes place in a threaded-forum to allow for self-regulation and metacognition among students (Vonderwell et al., 2007; Behncke, 2002). Additionally, to determine the effectiveness of the course design and assist in measuring assurance of learning, one should consider the questions in Table 5.

**Conclusion**

In any educational environment, assurance of learning is crucial for a course to be successful, but especially in the online environment. It is important for students to evaluate whether the necessary skills or abilities are possessed to be successful in an online program, but it is as equally important for instructors to evaluate whether the necessary skills or abilities are possessed within themselves to create an in-depth, thought-provoking environment that promotes learning among students.

To be able to evaluate readiness for online programs, students should be aware of the factors that can affect online learning. Those factors include: feeling of isolation, the inability to adapt to self-directed learning, dealing with heavy workloads, and lacking experience with online learning. To cope with these factors, universities need to provide expectations for online learning, to include: self-discipline, motivation, commitment, time management skills, and organization skills to work independently and to finish the job without need of prompting (Bocchi et al., 2004). Knowing the factors that can affect learning in the online
Table 5: Course Design Questions to Determine Assurance of Learning

1. Are the appropriate learning management system functions being utilized to the fullest?
2. Are the learning management system functions (e.g., chats, discussion forums, etc.) currently utilized, effective?
3. Are the course texts/articles promoting learning?
4. Are students having issues with course due dates?
5. Is the selected learning type appropriate for the course?
6. Do the discussion forums allow for critical thinking, reflection, metacognition, etc.?
7. Are the assignments for the course useful to learning?
8. Are various methods (surveys, chats, discussion forums, etc.) utilized to gather feedback from students in regards to course setup, assignments, etc.?

To establish an effective online courseroom, instructors should play the role of an evaluator. Thus, utilizing the questions in Table 3 will assist the instructor in being able to analyze and ask questions concerning the course design. Once the online course has been developed and started, the instructor should monitor the learning that takes place, verifying students are engaging learning by providing feedback and asking questions. Instructors can evaluate the level of engaged learning by utilizing the questions within Table 4.

Having a basic understanding of what is required in an online environment assists in the process of determining which delivery platform and features would be most beneficial to the university, as well as how the course should be developed. Therefore, the instructional design process is greatly important because it determines how the learning will take place. The learning that takes place in the online courseroom may incorporate (Bocchi et al., 2004): self-paced independent study,
asynchronous interactive learning, synchronous learning, and a combination of online and in-person learning. Designing the online courseroom requires evaluation of the learning that is to take place and ultimately tying learning management system functions in that compliment the learning method (e.g., chats, assignments, discussion forums).

Additionally, instructional design must also evaluate factors such as classroom size, course structure, the learning community in regards to the exchange of ideas, self-regulatory cognitions, learner autonomy, and writing skills. Effective instruction design will serve as the role of a guide by determining the engagement and learning of the course. Table 5 may be utilized to assist in determining the effectiveness of the course design and measuring assurance of learning through various questions.

To effectively measure assurance of learning, the readiness of students, instructors, and the instructional design process should be evaluated to implement online programs. Additionally, the role of students, instructors, and the instructional design process should be defined; utilizing the questions outlined in the paper provide an outline to assist universities in being able to clearly define those roles, as well as assist in the evaluation of assurance of learning within the online courseroom.

References


